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cc PC  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

4 July 1985

Dear Paul,

NBAM  
CDP 4/7.

Cultural Relations between the UK and the Soviet Union

A few weeks back your Minister asked what our policy on this subject now was. His question has prompted a re-examination of that policy, and what follows represents the outcome.

The policy we decided on a year ago was to encourage a gradual and phased increase in cultural contacts. We recognised then that the Russians, with central control of the Arts, would be able to get high profile events off the ground much sooner than we could, but that after some initial disparity in their favour, it should be possible to achieve a very approximate balance between inward and outward visits. Our interest is of course mainly in the latter, for the Arts are one of the most effective ways of getting British and Western ideas and values over to a wider Soviet audience. Equally, the Soviet aim is to show Soviet achievements and the "reasonable" face of the Soviet Union to Western audiences.

Our policy involves seeking to encourage British events of high quality in the Soviet Union, focussing in particular on new artistic ideas in areas where Soviet policy is restrictive. The two main events in that category now being planned are an exhibition of 20th century British Art, for 1987/8, and a visit by the Royal Shakespeare Company, possible in late 1986. The British Council is also involved in organising a number of smaller scale events.

None of this is of direct relevance to Lord Gowrie's responsibilities, but he has as you will know recently offered to visit Moscow in support of a British cultural event there. The Foreign Secretary is grateful for this offer and in principle would like to take your Minister up on it, once a sufficiently prestigious manifestation has been arranged. At the moment, for this year, there is only a fairly small exhibition of ceramics in November or December. We are considering the possibility of Sir John Burgh making a visit to Moscow to coincide with the opening, but we do not think it sufficiently prestigious to be worth Ministerial support.

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Next year, however, two events are under discussion, either of which could appropriately be supported by Lord Gowrie; a British film week and the aforementioned visit of the Royal Shakespeare Company. We will be in touch again once it is clear whether these events will be going forward, and when they will take place.

Two final aspects of UK/Soviet cultural relations which may be of interest to Lord Gowrie are the use of UK public money to support events in which Soviet artists/groups are involved, and attendance by Ministers at Soviet cultural events in the UK. On the first, we have decided that it should no longer be necessary to seek political clearance before eg regional arts councils make arrangements for the sponsorship of such events. In other words decisions should be taken on the artistic merits of the case and the criteria applying to all other foreign artists applied. We would, however, be grateful to know when major events sponsored by the Arts Council and its offshoots and involving high profile Soviet groups are in the offing, so that we can offer advice on any defensive briefing, bearing in mind the particular political circumstances.

On the second point, the present guidelines are set out in Roger Bone's letter of 16 April 1984. They give Ministers with direct links with the arts discretion to attend Soviet events in the UK to which they are invited and which they see benefit in attending.

I am copying this letter to Richard Hatfield, Cabinet Office, Charles Powell (No 10) and Neil Ward in the Northern Ireland Office.

*Yours Sincerely,*

*Colin Budd*

(C R Budd)  
Private Secretary

Paul Thomas Esq  
Private Secretary to Lord Gowrie

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